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SOCIAL, HUMANITARIAN AND HUMAN RIGHTS QUESTIONS: REPORTS OF SUBSIDIARY BODIES, CONFERENCES AND RELATED QUESTIONS

Narcotic drugs

Summary of the report of the International Narcotics Control Board for 1993

I. OVERVIEW

1. The International Narcotics Control Board (INCB) noted that the past two decades had witnessed a dramatic worsening of the world drug abuse situation, and the globalization of the drug problem. Clear evidence confirmed the trends noted by INCB in its previous reports towards rising economic power and political influence of drug cartels. In addition to the continuing problems of heroin and cocaine abuse, the Board drew attention to the increasing abuse of synthetic stimulants in many regions of the world.

2. In face of the drug abuse and trafficking situation, international cooperation had become a matter of urgent self-defence. Resolution 48/12, adopted by the General Assembly in October 1993, was a clear manifestation of the determination of Governments to increase international cooperation to combat drug abuse and trafficking.

3. The Board noted with satisfaction the consensus among governmental representatives at the forty-eighth session of the General Assembly against legalization of the non-medical use of drugs. Universal application of the provisions of international drug control treaties was essential to the functioning of the international drug control system. Indeed, there was evidence that drug trafficking organizations frequently made use of the

* E/1994/100.

territories of countries that were parties to the international drug control treaties and/or that had formally ratified conventions without implementing their provisions.

4. In view of the complex nature of drug abuse and trafficking, the Board stressed the importance of a balanced, system-wide approach that concentrates on all - political, economic, social and cultural - elements of the problem at all levels. In particular, demand and supply reduction strategies were interlinked. The Board drew Governments' attention to the crucial importance of demand reduction programmes, urging that demand reduction should become one of their priorities in the fight against drug abuse. The political will of Governments to tackle the problem, including the provision of the necessary financial resources, would be a crucial factor in the success of demand reduction strategies. Another condition was the community's response for cooperation. Enhanced efforts were also needed to combat money-laundering, and bank, corporate and official secrecy requirements must be relaxed, subject to appropriate safeguards, in order to ensure that laws making money-laundering a criminal offence were effective. Finally, the Board reiterated its deep concern about the impact of corruption on national drug control systems and called upon measures to combat it.

II. OPERATION OF THE INTERNATIONAL DRUG CONTROL SYSTEM

5. There continued to be deficiencies with regard to the implementation of the provisions of the conventions, including Governments' compliance with reporting obligations established by the treaties.

6. The international drug control system for narcotic drugs continued to function satisfactorily, primarily because of the system of estimates. The Board drew attention to continuing large-scale abuse of preparations containing codeine in several regions and to the Council's and Commission's resolutions regarding, inter alia, the use of heroin on human beings. As for opiate raw materials, global production was below total consumption by only 7 tonnes in morphine equivalent in 1993, and the balance was likely to be restored in 1994. However, the Board once again urged Governments concerned to restrict global production of opiate raw materials to a level corresponding to actual needs in opiates and to refrain from any proliferation of production.

7. The control of substances in Schedule II of the 1971 Convention appeared to have succeeded in preventing diversions into illicit channels, but Governments must continue to strengthen controls over the substances contained in Schedules III and IV, as recommended by the Economic and Social Council. Additional import-control measures established by importing countries could only be fully effective if complementary control measures were simultaneously enforced in exporting countries - for example, to ensure that exports respected import prohibition of certain substances under article 13 of the 1971 Convention and import-authorization requirements.

8. As for the 1988 Convention, INCB reminded Governments to ensure appropriate coordination between administrative services and law enforcement authorities involved in precursor control and to take all necessary mechanisms to enable

prompt reporting and full compliance with the provisions of that Convention. According to the seizure reports submitted to it, the Board noted that substances used in the illicit manufacture of cocaine, heroin, and amphetamines and/or methamphetamine had been seized the most frequently and in the largest quantities. Despite intensified efforts by Governments to prevent diversion of precursors, the quantities reported seized, however, remained only a small fraction of those used in illicit drug manufacture. Greater awareness of the importance of establishing effective control over precursors for all control authorities and for the chemical industry was urged by the Board.

III. ANALYSIS OF THE WORLD SITUATION

9. Africa continued to account for the highest number of countries (15) not party to any international drug control treaty. The prevailing political, economic, social and natural conditions of the continent created enormous obstacles for many Governments. However, limited law enforcement and limited prevention programmes as well as inadequate legislation and weak control over the pharmaceutical market contributed to an increase in drug abuse.

10. Cannabis remained the most abused drug in Africa. Morocco remained the main source of the cannabis resin found in European countries, but the incidence of shipments and amounts of cannabis originating from western and central African countries was increasing. Heroin and cocaine abuse were increasing as a result of transit activity towards mainly European markets. The abuse of psychotropic substances as well as their transport continued to be a very serious problem for the continent. In southern Africa, the illicit manufacture and distribution of methaqualone continued to be a highly profitable illicit business.

11. The lowest rate of accession to international drug treaties was in the countries of the Caribbean. Drug cartels continued to utilize the strategic position of the region in their trafficking, mainly in cocaine, which was also the case in Central America, and the increased traffic had led to growing abuse. Apart from weak control measures, legal loopholes in financial and banking laws made the region prone to increasing money-laundering activity. Governments in the Caribbean were, however, planning to establish a regional drug intelligence centre. Also, the Board noted a decrease in illicit trafficking in cannabis and cocaine in the Bahamas and Jamaica as a result of strict measures.

12. Turning to North America, the number of drug abusers continued to fall in the United States, but drug-related emergency cases increased as a result of the increased purity of some drugs (above all, heroin), increased potency (in the case of cannabis) and more dangerous methods of administration. Although most drugs abused in the United States were smuggled into the country, domestic cultivation of cannabis was increasing, and stimulants continued to be widely manufactured illicitly.

13. Cannabis was currently the most commonly abused drug in North America. Heroin abuse remained a significant cause of concern in Canada and the United States, and Colombia had become a new source for heroin imports, in addition to

Mexico and Asia. Cocaine, particularly in the form of "crack", represented the primary challenge to drug law enforcement in the United States.

14. In several countries in South America, illicit drug production, manufacture, traffic and abuse were consequences and, at the same time, causes of fundamental economic and social problems. Cannabis was cultivated in the majority of the countries of the region. Colombia and Peru registered an upswing in illicit poppy cultivation, found to be more profitable than coca bush.

15. Peru and Bolivia continued to be the main producers of coca leaf and - along with Brazil - were increasingly involved in the manufacture of cocaine hydrochloride. Colombia continued, however, to be the world's leading supplier of cocaine.

16. In East and South-east Asia, Cambodia, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and Viet Nam were not parties to any international drug control treaty. Subregional cooperation in the "Golden Triangle" between China, Myanmar and Thailand was an encouraging development. Cooperation had been enlarged to include the Lao People's Democratic Republic.

17. South-east Asia continued to be a major producer of illicit opium. Illicit heroin laboratories continued to operate in the Golden Triangle. Although Bangkok continued to be an important embarkation point for heroin bound for Europe and North America, southern China was being increasingly used for transit activities. Traditional opium abuse continued in the region but it was coupled with a spread of heroin abuse, especially intravenously, mainly among the hill tribes of Thailand and Myanmar. Heroin abuse was also spreading in China, from the southern provinces to other parts of the country.

18. Illicit manufacture of, traffic in and abuse of amphetamines - above all, methamphetamines - continued to be a major problem in several countries in the region. In addition to Taiwan province of China, other areas emerged as suppliers of methamphetamines for Japan, the Philippines and the Republic of Korea.

19. South Asia continued to be faced with growing transit trafficking in heroin from South-west and South-east Asia, accompanied by increasing abuse. In India, heroin abuse remained a major concern, was spreading from the northern part and large cities to other areas. Bangladesh was also witnessing an increase in heroin abuse. Cannabis abuse was common in Nepal. While the abuse of psychotropic substances was on the increase in all countries of the region, the illicit manufacture of methaqualone continued to be a major problem in India.

20. In the region of western Asia the Board welcomed the initiatives and efforts of Iran, Pakistan and Turkey to strengthen cooperation within the region, especially with Afghanistan and the newly independent States of the former Soviet Union in central Asia and the Caucasus. That was all the more important because Afghanistan and Pakistan continued to be a major source of illicit production and traffic in cannabis, opium, morphine and heroin.

21. Afghanistan remained the main source of cannabis resin, which was smuggled into Pakistan to be transported to Europe. There was also considerable illicit traffic in cannabis in the countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States, moving from central Asia towards other parts of the former Soviet Union. Afghanistan was also one of the largest producers of illicit opium. Central Asian countries such as Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic and Turkmenistan had also seen increasing poppy cultivation, especially in inaccessible mountainous areas. One of the key remaining routes of illicit heroin supply to Europe - the so-called "Balkan Route" - ran from Afghanistan and Pakistan through Iran and Turkey. There was also considerable illicit trafficking activity in opiates through Turkmenistan, Azerbaijan and Georgia to Turkey.

22. In Europe, although western European countries were increasing their cooperation and implementing advanced levels of legislation to counter money-laundering and to control precursors, the countries of eastern Europe were still in need of assistance in training and legislation. The general trend on the continent pointed to increased cooperation within the European Union and among the countries of the Balkan Route.

23. The abolition of border controls within the European Union, the opening of borders between East and West and the ongoing war in the former Yugoslavia, continued to be major challenges to drug control and law enforcement authorities in fulfilment of their responsibilities. Privatization and the introduction of a free market economy, coupled with a lack of adequate Government control mechanisms in the former socialist countries, made the control of licit drug manufacture, trade and distribution very difficult.

24. Legal loopholes especially in the case of control over certain psychotropic substances, added further difficulties, as was shown by the manufacture of MDMA ("ecstasy") in Hungary or of MDA tablets in Latvia. Transformation of the financial and banking services in the former socialist countries also made them prone to increased money-laundering activity. The rise in criminality was also closely linked with the drug business, especially in Belarus, the Russian Federation and Ukraine.

25. There was no change in the level of the abuse of cannabis, which remained the most abused drug, but there was some indication that cannabis abuse was spreading into the eastern part of the continent. Belarus, the Netherlands, the Russian Federation and Ukraine supplied cannabis for illicit domestic and foreign markets. Heroin abuse continued to be a major problem. The source of supply was mainly western Asia through the Balkan Route, which, as a result of the war in the former Yugoslavia, continued to be pushed northward, involving the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary and Romania. Cocaine abuse was increasing, with Colombia being the major source of supply and eastern European airports becoming target areas for smuggling cocaine into the continent. There were also indications that cocaine hydrochloride was being transformed into cocaine base ("crack") in some European countries. With regard to psychotropic substances, the increased illicit manufacture of amphetamines was singled out as a major development in Europe. The Netherlands continued to dominate as a source, but large-scale production was also taking place in eastern and central Europe - above all, in Poland.

26. Finally, although Oceania had not yet become a focus of major international concern, the Pacific islands were increasingly being used by drug traffickers as transit points, while the capacity of police and customs services was not sufficient to control the increasing illicit drug trade. Also, as the Pacific islands moved to modernize their economic and financial systems, they might become more attractive to criminal activities such as money-laundering. In the region as a whole, with the exception of Australia and New Zealand, the problem of drug abuse seemed to be limited to the abuse of cannabis. In Australia, however, there had been an increase in cocaine smuggling, and major heroin seizures.